

# Letter from Taizé

Preparing the Council of Youth

N° 5

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Letter from the Prior  
 1962

Along with the Intercontinental Team who prepared the « Joyful News » last Easter, we thought of the Council of Youth as a mere « instrument » that would enable us to live something together. Since then, through listening to many young people's intuition, I have come to recognise that we are being led well beyond that point, because, for many people, the Council of Youth will in itself represent an « event » in their lives. Through our decision that the way forward is in listening to young people, we have been led where we had not thought of going.

A young man was saying to me recently : « When you announced the Council of Youth on Easter Day, I understood straight away that, by this, you were committing your Community, its energies, and its future : that you were taking a tremendous risk with and for youth. » I think he had understood very well, and, all of us together, we shall know how to take other risks in the future.

In two months time, it will be Easter again and, still trying to listen to the intuition of young

people, we shall work out the next step in the preparation of the Council, and during the ensuing year, we shall live out what has been discerned.

Your brother Roger

## CHRISTMAS AT TAIZÉ

In spite of cold and snow, several hundred young folk were in Taizé during the Christmas and Epiphany period. One or two came from as far away as India, while others were on the point of setting off for South America, India and Australia. There was a « cell » that was leaving for the Scandinavian countries, while another had just come back from Spain. Among the many groups, there was a fairly large one of young German protestants preparing for the ministry.

The Italians were there in force, bringing with them experiences of the widest possible variety : a community whose members are physically handicapped, experiments in adult education, involvement in trade unionism. Two of them went off afterwards to begin a long trip throughout Italy. They will spend most of their time in the South investigating possibilities for the insertion of a small group of young people there : a project made possible thanks to the financial support of cells elsewhere in Italy.

One of the Italians had brought the October number of « Dimension », containing an interview with Dom Helder Camara, Archbishop of Recife, Brazil. To the question « Do you find the Council of Youth realistic or utopian ? » Dom Helder replies :

*« I am convinced that it was the Holy Spirit that inspired this idea in my brother Roger. We are well aware of the enormous responsibility that weighs on the shoulders*

of young people today. Wherever one goes, in rich countries and in poor, East and West, one encounters the same exacting younger generation. Their exigence is one of authenticity : with parents, professors and pastors, and above all they are exacting with regard to themselves. This younger generation that hungers and thirsts after justice in the world today, and that cries out to be understood, to find understanding, real understanding ! So much is being said about "dialogue", in the family, in the Churches, and in the schools, but how difficult it is to really understand young people ! I feel that Roger, with this luminous idea of a Council of Youth, is giving all of us an example of understanding and confidence in young people. »

During Evening Prayer, at Epiphany, Brother Roger read the text of a telegramme which he had just received from Pope Paul : « *Holy Father very touched by message of prayer of numerous young people preparing Council of Youth in Taizé. Expresses heartfelt thanks and invokes blessings of God on generous participants.* » During the same Prayer, an Italian trade unionist tried to express some of the perceptions that had come through in the course of several days' discussion : a form of political commitment which is neither left nor right nor centre, but out in front, « beyond ».

## UNITED STATES

A number of meetings in preparation for the Council of Youth have been planned in the United States. These are :

*Feb 4-7* : at the Childerley Farm near Chicago, Ill.

CONTACT : Br. Rudolf, 119 W. Locust St., Chicago, Ill. 60610. (312) 642-8590.

*March 4-7* : Fort Worth, Texas

CONTACT : Sister Mary Frances, Nolan Convent, 4501 Bridge Road, Fort Worth, Texas 76103



*March 12-15* : at the Freedom Quilting Bee, Alabama  
CONTACT : Rev. Francis X. Walter, Selma Project,  
P.O.Box 2628, Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35401.  
(205) 758-2301 / 758-3926

*March 18-21* : at Mount Saviour Monastery, New York  
CONTACT : Father Martin, Mount Saviour Monastery,  
Pine City, N.Y. 14871. 734-1688 (607)

*Late Fall 1971* : West Coast Meeting. To be announced.  
Send inquiries to « Meetings », F - 71 - Taizé-Community, France.

## NEWS FROM CELLS

### INDIA :

Following a number of trips made by Moiz in different parts of India, letters have been coming in from young Indians. Writing on Christmas Eve, Nalini describes her waiting for Christ :

In my country, very few will celebrate this great feast, very few will know of the tremendous love that made it possible... That is why it means something for me to be a Christian in India — it is a challenge. As far as the Council is concerned, several groups have got under way, but, as I told you, they will be different from those elsewhere because of the special situation in India. At the present time, the mood is sad in India. »

A young man from Bombay writes :

You are aware that India is a great challenge to the social reformer whatever be his Caste, Creed or Religion there is so much to be done. Fortunately, there are many organisations, Christian and secular, doing beautiful, constructive work for the development of community. And all those who have a chance to participate in small or big way in community development, know well that any foreign models, not even concepts, can be adopted. We have to devise and initiate new forms, concepts, rules, may be for every individual project. The situation at times becomes frustrating and aspirations vanish and no new ones arise in there place. This is the point when a sense of defeatism sets in, producing split motives, transferring hopes and ambitions to the level of intellectual evolution. »

### ENGLAND :

We are a group of students who meet together a few times a week to talk, work, and occasionally to worship. It is a very diverse

group, but the work we do, decorating for old and handicapped people, provides a common bond between us. The expression of this bond is best seen in the meal we share each week, on Saturday evening, after we have finished the day's decorating work.

» The last "Agape" was an interesting occasion for we decided to share the meal and the worship, both at the same time, in an attempt to make the whole more spontaneous and unified. We chose the theme of "basic poverty", and we were able to relate it to the situation of those for whom we do our decorating work. In that sense, our worship was an expression of the work we had been doing together. We conducted the "agape" by means of readings which provoked discussion, prayer and silence.»

## FRANCE :

«I work in an electronics factory, assembling T.V. sets. I have been on this assembly line for four months now. Living the "festival" in this plant means struggling for fairer wages and for better understanding between management and labor. It certainly means a celebration for me when somebody passes the hat round for one for our work-mates who is in hospital. I do believe that "celebration" and "festivity" are meaningful in this context, and in the New Year I am getting together a few work-mates to form a cell.» (Lons-le-Saunier)

«In our respective faculties at the university, attitudes can vary a great deal. Here at Nanterre, the terrain has hardly been touched... caution and audacity have to go together! We will have to begin using our imagination so as to find new ways of sharing the "Joyful News" with fellow students. Sometimes you are given ways of doing this by providence! One of the girls was rushing to catch her train, she stumbled and all her books and papers went off in every direction. As she bent down to pick them up, another girl came along to give her a hand and noticed the "pebble" she was wearing. "Oh! The Taizé pebble!" They exchanged addresses and another link had been formed.» (Paris)

«It is hard to go home and get back to every day life. Yet I suppose that it is better that things are that way for it forces you to wake up to the fact that not everything is solved by young people coming together to pray. Blessed are the active, for they will find plenty to do... For the last five months, the seven of us in our cell have been trying to go much farther in sharing together on every level : beginning with self, so as to be able to open oneself to others in the sharing of the Gospel, of the Eucharist, of a meal, and of our lives. Little by little we have learned to listen to one another and to avoid trying to up-stage the other.» (Strasbourg)

«It is difficult to say who exactly belongs to our cell for we are never able to be all together on the same day. We meet for prayer

three mornings a week, before going off to work. This is not always easy, but all the same, we simply try to be there together and to say "Maranatha ! Come, Lord Jesus !" We take a verse from a psalm or from the Gospel and try to explore its meaning in practice throughout the day.

» Then too, we are attempting to make a survey of the North African and African section of Marseille. The aim is primarily to get to know the life of these people and the problems that they are facing : prostitution, unemployment, literacy level, housing. One or two of our group are now living in the North African section in order to be quite simply friends and neighbours. Others are exploring the different possibilities of political commitment and, fortunately, politics do not divide us. Yesterday two of us took part, as « sympathisers » in an elementary school run by the Communist Party.» (Marseille)

## **BELGIUM :**

« Two of our group took part in a meeting in Taizé in august. When they got back to Bruxelles, they tried to communicate to the rest of us something of the experience of fraternity they have lived through. Sometimes they had a hard time trying to make us understand that they did not know any more than we did what this Council would be. And for the rest of us it seemed pretty hard to commit ourselves to an enterprise that could not be defined and that is essentially provisional.

» In spite of all that, twelve of us got together and decided to risk it. We had a lot of difficulties at the beginning because we did not know one another very well. Since we are all students, we are pretty strong in "theory" and we are used to asking one another questions. Then came the discovery that we more concerned with forcing our own ideas on the others, rather than listening to their ideas. All things considered, we are moving forward.» (Bruxelles)

## **ANNOUNCING THE COUNCIL OF YOUTH**

The aim is to share the joyful news with young people all over the world. So this winter has seen numbers of journeys made, setting out from Taizé to go to Africa, Spain, England, Belgium and Luxembourg, West Germany, Eastern Europe and, next March, to the United States. And then, this coming summer, we are expecting some fifteen young black Americans from a poor region of the States.



... in Africa

On December 12<sup>th</sup> a small cell set out for Africa. Marianne, Hélène and Marie-Claude will stay for three months in Yaoundé (Cameroun) and then three months in Kinshasa (Congo). They see the aim of their voyage as follows :

« To be with Africans for a time, meeting them, listening to them. To make a number of contacts for the preparation of the Council of Youth in Africa that are difficult to make in writing.

» Also, to try to realise by life in fraternity a visible unity, reconciliation, sustained by prayer — more or less discretely. It is a journey made in friendship that we want to be a tangible sign of solidarity and of common searching, as well as a recognition that important things are being lived in Africa that we would like to discover together. But will we be allowed to leave off being seen as rich whites so as to meet them as brothers? We are going to tip-toe in, trying to understand the delicacy of what is being lived and of what is maturing.»

Since their arrival they write :

« We have just met an African bishop. He spoke to us very simply of the basic problems of his ministry. He feels that it is necessary to rediscover the liberating value of the spoken word, so that it can speak to the conscience. Then, rediscover the roots of African culture so that the faith can be carried by the tree of "Africanity". He finds it essential to set man free, not just to be concerned about development; besides, the two go together, since man is tied down by fears, beliefs, taboos that prevent any development. Hence the importance of the personal discovery of the God who is close at hand, who knows me by my name, who calls on me to let him come to dwell with me.»

Setting out, they wondered if the preoccupations of the Council of Youth correspond to anything deep for Africa; after this conversation they concluded :

*« For this bishop, the path proposed by the Joyful News corresponds to a real search for a way of africanising the christian faith. »*

*... In Spain*

For three weeks, Gianni, Giovanni, Cristino, José and Gérard travelled through Southern Spain, mainly in Estremadura and Andaluz. They were there at a particular moment : « the events connected with the trial at Burgos had a great influence, directing our exchanges towards the themes of the search for justice ».

*« We met many young people convinced that the social difficulties would not be resolved simply by economic changes but by a cultural effort. The school is one of the means by which man acquires a critical attitude, an awareness of his responsibility for the choices that he has to make.*

*» In Barcelona and in several towns in the South we found groups involved in the education of the children of poor quarters, of adults, immigrants. In Barcelona, Josefina and her cell, with a minimum of means, look after 80 children from the suburbs every day. Through them, we understood that schooling is a simple way of taking part in the struggle for the liberation of man. At Malaga Paqui, a young school-mistress, with her fiancé, a young worker, runs a school for adults. Elsewhere we met a whole group of students who have left everything to live with immigrants.*

*» All over the South we met many animators of youth groups, students, workers and above all, peasants. In a large town like Seville, we would have had to stay at least a week to accept all the invitations. There we saw hundreds of young people, the afternoon, evening, night and all through the day until we had to leave.*

*» We also went to one of the largest mining regions in Spain. Everything is still done entirely by hand. Wages are low — there is no alternative work in the region. A miner that we knew introduced us to a large group of*



young people in the village; we spent a long time talking about the Joyful News, always linking it with the local reality.

» Those living in the South are particularly lacking in information and feel far away from the main currents of ideas. Many told us how much they appreciated being able, by means of the preparation for the Council of Youth, to listen what is happening in other parts of Spain and in other countries in Europe.

...In Great Britain

« There were two of us, travelling around Britain on a month long trip. It is difficult to draw together one's impressions from such a diversity of experiences and meetings: young people and old, students and workers, Church leaders, press and television men, young folk from overseas.

» We gathered right away how essential it was to be "concrete" in our presentation. The first question: "What is the aim of this council? How will it be organised?" On the other hand, there were plenty of people who said: "Tell us about the festival".

» In Wales, the difficulties were very much on a linguistic level! However, our ignorance of their language in no way affected the reception we were given by such friendly and generous people. At a Welsh speaking service, with the most extraordinary singing, we announced the Joyful News and the preparation of the Council of Youth. All this now exists in Welsh!

» In over fifty meetings, up and down the country, there were often surprises. We discovered the existence of a number of cells who had already begun preparing the Council. There were others who were simply waiting to be brought together in order to get started.

» Among those we met, political tension seemed little in evidence. Nevertheless we were aware of the concern for justice among a large number. One group, involved in

a peace movement, particularly struck us, with their preoccupation at the present time with the sale of arms to South Africa and their search for nonviolent means of sensitizing public opinion.

» Press campaigns and documentation that is of high quality and readily available make it possible to be well informed on the problem of the Third World. Thousands of students have committed themselves to giving a percentage of their income to the Third World. However, as one of their leaders told us, "People are quite willing to help financially, but not too interested in attending meetings where they might be obliged to come to grips with the root of the problem".

» How can we acquire the sense of the universal "in a world that has become a village"? How can we discover within ourselves that new mentality, that "inner adventure", which will enable us not simply to give, but to receive, and to listen to what comes to us from the Southern continents? These were important questions, for our meetings were often attended by people from other countries. In Edinburgh, we spoke with people from Africa, Asia, Australia, and a Korean minister asked us how to announce the Council of Youth in his country.»

## **FESTIVITY : LIBERATION : CELEBRATION**

Continuing the series of extracts from last summer's exploration of the « festival », a theme that comes from the first part of the « Joyful News ».

**Question 3 : Where can I find the real meaning of festivity and celebration ? What are the means by which I can continually begin again in the face of discouragement ?**

Can we go on talking about dryness and desert when the sources of festivity are so numerous ? In spite of the

*failures that mark out a man's life, endeavour is resumed each day, for the external world is there, the world whose appeal incites a new beginning; and because of the strength of Christ risen in man which permits him to live straining toward the fulfilment of a promise.*

« Every manifestation of life is a source of festivity : the countryside, children, young people singing, a smile. Every victory of life over death. The feeling of responsibility for others. »

« Through suffering : when you suffer, you have reasons for looking for hope, and festival is tension. You have to stop looking for easy ways out and face up to problems. Festivity is struggle. Difficulties themselves can give a new impetus. »

« Inner celebration comes from a yes repeated continually to God, from the acceptance of the present moment. The rock on which I stand is faith in Christ. »

« What makes me start off again is that life-force which is within me. It is irrational. I cannot explain it. And then, if you want to live, you want to be happy, so you always set out again. »

« For the christian, celebration is the certainty that Jesus Christ celebrates his presence in us from morning till night, brings us through the wearing effects of time, the monotony of existence, because he has taken hold of our life. The christian festival is completely compatible with suffering and conflict. Even when the christian is at the heart of the struggle, he preserves deep within him a zone of hope. Then he is capable of vibrating to the joy within. To live the festival is to communicate in the fulness of Christ living in us : it is the festive waiting for his return. »

« Active in a political party, I find the strength to begin again first of all in a hope that is simply human. I know that I am not alone, and that, even if I fail, everything can change one day. But there comes a moment when I realise the radical impossibility of overcoming evil. Faced with that double suffering : the sight of evil and my own incapacity of overcoming it, I feel the need to turn towards Christ in prayer, the desire to offer that suffering to him and to call on him for help. »

« ... living with him in the depths of myself. Praying through his life, his actions, his words, his silence, as one is able. Offering everything to God. Reaching down within oneself and there finding God who is Love ; running toward the others. Or, running toward the others and there finding God, then coming back within self. God accepts all the movements, all the steps in the dance of him who listens, who embraces his rhythm and follows his music. Talking to God, but especially being silent ; searching within oneself, searching for God. Approaching the mystery within oneself ; listening to the question that is the voice of God who calls us and who awaits our life as echo and response. »



« My life is a canvas, an outline, that must be filled in through successive touches. A false stroke of the brush can be corrected by another. Nothing is definite so long as the hand of the artist is impelled by life. That is why I can always start again. »

**Question 4 : How can we make the milieux in which we live (family, school, university, church, trade union, party) into liberating communities ?**

In her introduction to this question, Margarita Moyano said : « ... When we were talking about the factors that inhibit festivity, among the obstacles we condemned were structures and life-systems that alienate and impede man's fulfilment. But, are you aware of a need to liberate yourselves ? Do you feel the necessity of freeing yourselves from all the bondage of the consumer society and from a "rich-nation" mentality ? How can man be made free ? How can the festival be made possible for all men ? How can we create conditions that allow all men to live and to be truly men ? How can you, people of the Northern hemisphere, free yourselves and at the same time make the true liberation, the festival, possible for other peoples ? »

« There will be no festival between men so long as relations on an equal footing, in true reciprocity, have not been established between the nations : as long as the attitude of the Northern continents towards the countries of the south remains one of "taking" rather than being prepared to "receive" ; as long as neo-colonialist exploitation, both cultural and economic, persists. »

« In the family, reconciliation with my parents. To try not to flatter them, nor to "blacken" them. To try to be generous in my attitude towards them : to share the festival with them. »

« To work for greater instruction of the masses so that they may reach a state of critical consciousness and be able to take their own destiny in hand. »

« During the vacation, I experienced forgiveness with another person. It is awful to recognise one's own faults and to forgive the other's, but afterwards comes the festival. This is liberation ! »

« Unless we persist in questioning and re-evaluating what we are doing, the goal we have set, regardless of its value, will become enclosed in a rigid system, incapable of liberating. »

« The sole motive behind co-operation is exploitation. From our vantage point, the exploitation of the so-called "under-developed countries" by "developed countries" must be relentlessly exposed, so that the former may be able to develop their own civilization — and not ours, which is an alienating one for them. Farthermore, the civilization that we are imposing should itself be called in question. »

« Throughout this week, all of us in my group have experienced a spontaneous liturgical celebration : arising from our life, our friendship, and from faith in Christ who brings us together. Our experience makes us ask : Why is it that the aspect of our christian communities is so often dreary and far from festive ? Is it because we have nothing left to express ? Has the love in our local church communities grown so feeble that it can no longer create nor live nor manifest itself ? Is this the result of forms imposed on us — that are an obscure language which is irrelevant to life ? »

« I love the Church because she is the human figure of Christ, she is his body. I am often tempted to condemn the sores that disfigure and corrode her like leprosy : so many compromises with the powers that be, power that muzzles her and inhibits her from fulfilling her basic role of announcing the Good News of Christ dead and risen ; this message of love and justice for all men and especially for the poor and disinherited : the weight of the hierarchy that often seems like an authority without recourse, as guardian of prerogatives rather than service of unity : and the other weight, that of structures and of fear that stifles the freedom to be. In saying all this, it is my own sentence that I pronounce, for I too am of the Church, and her poverty is mine. »

**TAIZÉ 1971**

## **EASTER**

Thursday afternoon, 8 april, till the morning of tuesday, 13 april : dates for young folk who would like to celebrate the Risen Christ in Taizé this year. The accent is on celebration : the second stage of the preparation of the Council of Youth will be announced.

Please book as quickly as possible by means of the registration form at the back of this *Letter*. While bookings will of course be carefully noted, no acknowledgments will be sent out.

Suggested price per person, per day : 1.70 U.S. Dollars / 68 p. U.K.

Please bring sleeping bags, blankets, pneumatic mattresses, etc., as protection against the cold.

Volunteers for the « Reception Team » are asked to write beforehand and to arrive in Taizé on the evening of monday, 5th april.

It is clear that there are limits to the numbers that the Church of Reconciliation can hold. Priority will be given to those coming from far away. We appeal therefore to all who can come during the week AFTER Easter — and especially the French — to do so, rather than at Easter itself : the same conditions, the same insights, from the evening of tuesday 13 april till sunday 18.

## INTERNATIONAL YOUTH WEEKS : SUMMER PROGRAM

International Meetings in preparation for the Council of Youth will be held on a weekly basis, monday evening to sunday midday, from 28 june till 5 september.

In addition, shorter meetings will be held on the following dates : 5-8 august ; 26-29 august ; 9-12 september.

These meetings are designed for young folk who are unable to come for a full week.

At all of these meetings, a complete system of simultaneous translation is in operation for the plenary sessions. Group discussion is arranged according to the languages of the participants.

**PARTICIPANTS** : Young folk aged 18 to 30, including young married couples. You are asked to book for one week only. An effort will be made each week to balance the number of men and girls.

**COSTS** : (including meals) This is left to each person's means and sense of responsibility. A suggested price per person, per day is 1.70 U.S. Dollars : 68 p. Those able to pay more than this are asked to do so in order to help those who cannot.

**REGISTRATION** : Please register beforehand by means of the form on the back page of this *Letter*. Your booking will be acknowledged at the beginning of the summer. Groups are asked to send in, as far as possible, a form for each member of the group.

**RECEPTION AND ANIMATION TEAM** : Volunteers for either of these services are asked to write as soon as possible. They are expected to arrive in Taizé on the friday evening preceding the Week in which they wish to take part.



**ACCOMMODATION** : While a certain amount of very simple dormitory accommodation is available, all those who can are urged to bring their own tents. Everyone is expected to bring his own sleeping material.

**INDIVIDUAL RETREAT** : After the Week, those who wish may extend their stay by a few days of silence and retreat. Men and girls are housed in Taizé, neighbouring villages, and the women's communities in the region.

Apart from the International Weeks for preparation of the Council of Youth, numerous other meetings will be held in Taizé :

Meetings for married couples, in french, german and english languages,

Meetings for children, for adolescents and for elderly people.

All enquiries about these meetings should be sent to :  
*Rencontres*, F - 71 - Taizé-Communauté (France).

*Please do not forget to tell us if you change your address !*

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Those who have not yet been able to contribute to the cost of « *Letter from Taizé* » for 1970-71 are invited to do so either by cheque or international money order, addressed to « *Letter from Taizé* », F - 71 - Taizé-Community (France). The suggested minimum subscription per annum is 1.30 Dollars U.S. = 58 p. U.K.

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## Registration form : Easter 1971

NAME : ..... First Name : .....  
ADDRESS : (Street & N°) ..... TOWN : .....  
State/County : ..... Country : .....  
Year of birth : ..... Job/Profession : .....  
Will take part in :  
★ the Easter celebration from ..... to .....  
★ the meeting during the week after Easter, from tuesday 13 till  
sunday 18 april.  
★ Will bring a tent, with ..... places available.  
★ Wishes a place in a dormitory (the number of places is limited).  
Will take part in the RECEPTION TEAM from monday 5 april till  
\*tuesday 13 april / \* sunday 18 april.  
Has a good working knowledge of :  
english — french — german — italian — spanish — or .....  
Would like to help with simultaneous translation from french  
into : .....  
Wishes to receive ..... extra registration forms.  
Book in advance. Please fill in this form and return it to :  
*Rencontres, F - 71 - Taizé-Community (France).*

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## Registration form : Summer 1971

NAME : ..... First Name : .....  
ADDRESS : (Street & N°) ..... TOWN : .....  
State/County : ..... Country : .....  
Year of birth : ..... Job/Profession : .....  
Wishes to take part in the International Week, from monday .....  
..... till sunday .....  
★ Will bring a tent, with ..... places available.  
★ Wishes a place in a dormitory (the number of places is limited).  
Wishes to take part in the reception and animation of the Week, and  
will arrive on the friday preceding that week.  
Has a good working knowledge of :  
english — french — german — italian — spanish — or .....  
Would like to help with simultaneous translation from french  
into : .....  
Wishes to receive ..... extra registration forms.  
Book in advance. Please fill in this form and return it to :  
*Rencontres, F - 71 - Taizé-Community (France).*